

## Gilbert Picq & ses Fils, Chichée



Brothers Didier and Pascal quickly established themselves as rigorous growers after taking over this 32-acre domaine from their father in 1976. They prune severely in winter and de-bud twice in spring for low yields. They farm according to the ecological but pragmatic principles of *lutte raisonnée*, or reasoned fight. They do alcoholic and malolactic fermentation in steel, and age the wine in steel. For a while, their Japanese importer demanded that they make a cuvée in barrel for him, but eventually he saw the light and gave it up. They look for elegance, length, purity and minerality in their wines, while aiming for age-worthiness and moderate levels of alcohol. It's kind of a nice throwback.

The domaine and its vineyards are in the commune of Chichée, upstream from the town of Chablis and the grand crus in the Serein River Valley. The hills are steep here and are graced with two noble premier crus on either side of the river: Vosgros and Vaucoupin. The latter is especially noteworthy, for Vaucoupin occupies the same contours as the grand crus on the right bank and is considered to be one of the best premier crus in Chablis.

The big change of late here happened with the 2006 vintage, when the brothers got a sorting table. This enabled them to control their grape selections to the point where they elected to forgo yeast inoculations. Didier admits to a number of sleepless nights because the fermentations were consequently much slower than normal, but the longer malolactic fermentations resulted in better textures, and so he has continued working with indigenous yeast in subsequent vintages.

### The Wines

- *Chablis*: Normally this comes from 12 parcels and is invariably chock full of flinty seashell essence, making it a quintessential Chablis.
- *Chablis Dessus la Carrière*: The name translates as "over the quarry," for the two parcels that are reserved for this wine grow above an old quarry in a bed of pure Kimmeridgian limestone, full of big *roches mère*, or mother rocks. Both parcels were planted in the 1970s, one with a clone, the other with a *sélection massale*, and the two cover just under five acres of ground. These two parcels are always the first to be harvested by the Picqs, and the last to be bottled.
- *Chablis Vieilles Vignes*: This comes primarily from two hand-harvested parcels (occasionally part of a third is added) of 50+ year-old-vines totaling 0.77 acres.
- *Chablis 1er cru Vosgros*: The Picqs have two parcels here totaling 3.5 acres. The larger of the two was planted in the 1960s; the smaller (half the size) was planted in the early 1980s, and both parcels face southwest. Vosgros is on the left bank. Its soil is brown marl limestone, and its wine, young, has a textured plumpness overlying its racy acidity.
- *Chablis 1er cru Vaucoupin*: The domaine's 1.5 acre parcel was planted on the right bank in 1989 on a terrifically steep, south-facing hillside where the winter snow is always first to melt. The soil here is pure Kimmeridgian limestone, white and layered, and the wine brims with Chablis's classic steely cut and minerality. The Picq parcel is hand-harvested.